

The Future of Democracy in South Africa

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I *Introduction*

"The struggle of the African National Congress is a truly national one. It is a struggle of the African people, inspired by their own suffering and their own experience. It is a struggle for the right to live. During my life-time I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

These are the last public words of Mr Nelson Mandela before he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964. He evidently thought then that democracy had a future in South Africa, though he had already been driven to the conclusion that it could only be achieved by some kind of revolutionary violence.

"What has become very apparent recently is that there is nothing negotiable in South Africa any more. The Government is determined on its course, and nothing will change its direction. They will not talk with anyone. The fly has no way to negotiate with the spider. What is needed is [for the Western democracies] to understand the harsh realities of the South African system, that it is a thoroughly oppressive system, that the basic dynamic is the preservation of white power and privilege, and that whites generally speaking have no intention of ever sharing power and privilege".

These are the words of the Rev Theo Kotze in July 1978, after fleeing from South Africa and his banning order to England. It might be said that he was less hopeful than Mr Mandela was fourteen years before on the prospects of democracy in South Africa. At least he agrees that democracy is not going to be achieved there by negotiation or any process of political, social evolution.

And yet the question of democracy's future in South Africa is one that the South African Institute of Race Relations thought worth raising in 1976 by offering a prize for the best essay on the subject.¹ And it may not be irrelevant either to the concept of democracy or to the situation in South Africa, first to try and analyse the ways in which the term 'democracy' may legitimately be used, and then to set them against that situation.

II *Analysis of the term 'democracy'*

First we must rid the word of a false connotation that it has

acquired in the course of the present century. Since 1918, I suppose, democracy has become quite simply and absolutely 'a good thing'. It has become so good and so respectable as to be in danger of losing all useful meaning. Nobody dares to deny being in favour of it. So South African nationalists justify their system of government as democratic, and East German communists theirs, each with an equal mixture of sincerity, hypocrisy and uncritical confusion of mind.

That 'democracy' should not be treated as a word intrinsically denoting positive value is shown by the way it was used in much 19th century literature. For most of that century, and for most of its political theorists and statesmen, it was not a respectable word at all. To be labelled democratic was to receive as vile a slur on one's political character as to be called communist in South Africa or fascist in Russia today – almost actionable.

Here at any rate, let us treat the word purely as a descriptive term, signifying a form of government "of the people, for the people, by the people". Then we may hope to discuss with a modicum of lucidity, first whether such a form of government has a future in South Africa (we are not, incidentally assuming that it has a past there), and second whether it would be a suitable form of government to promote any or all of the *values* designated by such terms as peace, freedom, fraternity, social and economic justice, order, equality, law, solidarity, unity.

a) *Aboriginal or pure democracy*

You cannot have democracy unless you first have a *demos*. So the kind of democracy you may hope to get will depend on the kind of *demos* you have, its size, its history, its economy, its traditions and culture, its relations with neighbouring *demoi*. And what constitutes a *demos*? Originally, it seems, it was contrasted with a *polis*, country against town; it was the rural, plebeian community or commune contrasted with the urban fortress which was the seat of the local warrior aristocracy.

So pure and simple democracy, it we are to take the word strictly, will be village democracy, or at the most small town democracy. At any rate it will presuppose a community in which everybody more or less knows everybody else; a clan or tribal community, though not necessarily organised by ties of kinship such as these words suggest. Such a small, face-to-face community need not, of course, be governed democratically, but only such a community can be, in the strictest sense. What is a necessary prerequisite for such democracy is not only the smallness of the community but also its cultural, social and economic *homogeneity*.

b) *Representative democracy:*

i) *in comparatively homogeneous states*

But such communities or demes have almost everywhere long been engulfed in larger units of government or states. Can such larger states ever be genuinely democratic? If there is a certain

homogeneity among the communities that make up the state, if they have a common culture and language and many common interests, then a genuine, but now indirect system of democratic government is possible, democracy by representation.

This is the kind of democracy we are familiar with in the West European tradition. In fact we habitually accept it without question as the standard form of democracy. But we must stress again that to be an effective and roughly equitable form of government it presupposes a more or less homogeneous society – or at least a fairly well homogenised society as in the United States. Its Achilles' heel is the heterogeneous minority. The blacks in America, the Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Welsh and Scottish nationalists in Britain, the Breton and Corsican separatists in France, have all been showing up the three greatest democracies as being neither so harmoniously homogeneous nor therefore so genuinely democratic as they had long liked to pretend. That's why Mr Andrew Young was almost obliged from time to time to make those observations that so infuriated the various kinds of WASP in these countries.

In this connexion we should also note that such roughly homogeneous democracies find it even more difficult than autocratic or aristocratic systems of government to absorb with hospitable tolerance alien immigrant groups of any size, at least if these are unprepared to be homogenised into the host culture, or prevented from being so by the host society's prejudices.

ii *in heterogeneous states; federal and imperial democracy*

If the demes or deme agglomerates making up the state are simply heterogeneous and recognised as such from the start, then two forms of democracy are possible. In the federal form there will be representative government by mutual agreement, by treaty, by federation; the classic example is the Swiss Federation. In what I call the imperial form one *demos*, homogeneous and democratically organised in itself, exercises an imperial dominion over various subject *demoi*. Such was the democracy of Periclean Athens, the archetype of all democracies; and such in effect is the present constitution of South Africa. The subject peoples of an imperial democracy are certainly not likely to be more justly governed than those of an imperial autocracy like the Roman Empire.

c) *The heterogeneous component in democratic societies: parties*

The term 'homogeneous society' which is so essentially connected with democratic government is certainly a rather variable one. Homogeneity can never be absolute or total. If it were it would simply erase any genuine society. But a large measure of commonness must be presupposed to the democratically organised state.

However, also presupposed, and certainly given in the kind of

state we are considering, is an internal heterogeneity of the society or societies which make it up. If the state is composed of heterogeneous communities, as in a federal democracy, these can usually be defined by the territory they occupy. That at least is the most convenient political assumption, although it is usually more or less belied by the facts. The pattern however which we start with is of a horizontal juxtaposition of heterogeneous homogeneities. But within each homogeneous unit there are usual vertical heterogeneities of *class*, of diverse economic interests, perhaps also of religion, inevitably of opinion. There is a tendency, in a word, to the formation of *parties*, a word that by definition signifies division, dissensions, 'partition'. And so a characteristic of such representative democracies as have developed on the West European – in fact chiefly on the British – model has been the party system. It is basically a system of balance of power between various interests and groups of opinion. The effective working of the democracy presupposes this balance or interplay of power as much as it presupposes the underlying homogeneity of the *demos*.

And so the system gets seriously distorted and functions badly where party becomes identified with a horizontally homogeneous group or *demos* within a heterogeneous agglomerate of such groups; that is, where the vertical divisions in society swing round to coincide with the horizontal ones. We see this distortion at work in Northern Ireland, where the parties get identified with the heterogeneous *demos*; and in South Africa, in the bosom of the imperial democratic group, where the nationalist party is practically identified with the culturally homogeneous Boer (Afrikaner)² *demos*.

d) *Evolutionary democracies*

But modern democracies can be classified, not only according to the different combinations of homo- and heterogeneity within the states concerned, but also according to their origins. Broadly speaking we may distinguish between democracy by revolution and by evolution. Under this latter head I would classify all Western democracies and those established on the Western model, which is in fact ultimately the British model. This archetypal British democracy is one that has evolved, and very recently too, from an older non-democratic constitution of society. So while it is true that a number of these democracies trace their origins historically to revolutions, notably the American and French democracies; none the less the model which their founding fathers had before their eyes was the constitution of the United Kingdom. This constitution, when studied and copied and modified by others in the 18th and 19th centuries, was not actually democratic, only potentially so, and it is no doubt true that many of its derivatives attained to a full democratic form before the parent constitution did. But because they were in one degree or another derived from it, I think it is just to classify all these constitutions as instances

of evolutionary democracy, which derive from the archetypal constitution of the United Kingdom certain basic and perhaps scarcely conscious assumptions.

Now because the English constitution was originally not democratic at all, but monarchical, modified by a complex aristocratic element; and because its most crucial developments occurred in the course of a long struggle between the monarchical and aristocratic elements, with the latter emerging victorious; and because it then evolved into a democratic form by a less dramatic and embittered interplay between popular and oligarchic forces; it has developed throughout on one extremely important but hardly analysed assumption, namely the *non-identity* of government and people, the radical distinction between Us and Them. To overstate the case a little, government was assumed to be a necessary evil, and the less of it that the people could do with the better, whether they were embodied in the *oligoi* or the *demos*, in the propertied or in the working classes.

The whole drive therefore of this kind of constitutional evolution was always in the direction of limiting and controlling the power of the government. The final result of such development in its democratic form is *not* really of a people that governs itself, even through its representatives, but of a people that has a strong and legal negative power to check and restrain those who govern it. The basic attitude, typically expressed by a liberal aristocrat, is the famous dictum that all power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. With this kind of orientation of the social mind democratic power will be advocated and eventually conceded to the people at large, not so much for the good it can do as for the harm it can prevent; for its negative value in checking the abuse of power by persons in authority, rather than for its positive value in promoting beneficent state control.

Two constitutional techniques were evolved in pursuit of this essentially negative kind of democracy. One was the American system of separation of powers, which was at that time mistakenly thought to be the key principle of the British constitution. The other was the real British principle, only fully worked out rather later and lucidly expressed by Bagehot, of ministerial responsibility, or responsible government.

The socio-political values prompting this kind of development are libertarian rather than egalitarian. People have a right to as much freedom as is compatible with social free speech, free association, free enjoyment of property, and of course freedom from arbitrary arrest, imprisonment and execution; such are the values that constitutions of this kind are designed to uphold. On the other hand, rights to economic and social equality, or even to economic and social welfare, are not so highly valued, are often indeed not acknowledged as genuine constitutional *rights* at all. But the rights of groups at the bottom of the social scale to such

political power as they need to promote their legitimate interests and defend their liberties will be genuinely admitted, and eventually and honestly conceded.

e) *Revolutionary democracies*

The history and the inspiration of revolutionary democracies is quite different and at all points offers a contrast. The aim of their founders has not been to vindicate liberties against actually or potentially tyrannical governments, but to overthrow exploitative systems of society and replace them with more equitable ones. Their basic assumption has not been the disjunction between people and government but their proper identification. Their instinct therefore is always to maximise government, not to minimise it, because if it is government *by* the people (the people identified with the government) it is bound to be government in the interests of the people. Once they have acquired power for the people, they have felt no rational need for checks or limitations on that power. What proper limits can there be to what, in theory, is total self-government? They are as absolutist in their political theory as the absolute monarchies of the *ancien régime*, and the historical right of the people, the proletariat, takes for them the place of the divine right of kings.

The values inspiring this kind of democracy are egalitarian and fraternal rather than libertarian and individualistic. The rights that really matter in this system are the rights of everyone to a fair share; and the duties of everyone to make a fair contribution to society are equally stressed, far more so than in the evolutionary or liberal type of democracy. Hence the characteristic slogan, "To each according to his need, from each according to his capacity".

The vital instrument for this sort of democracy, whose fundamental aim is not checking the power of government but wielding it, is not representative institutions, independent judiciary and so on, but the party. And the party is in fact, by the accidents of history, misnamed as such, because it is not thought of as representing a *part* of the social system or a section of opinion, or particular legitimate interests, but the whole. It is by self-definition the party of the people, the proletariat, the masses. It is with these and their assumed community of interests in the just and equal distribution of the good things of life and of responsibility to work for them, that the homogeneity necessary for a democratic society lies. Heterogeneous distinctions within the masses, for example of race, culture, language and religion, are indifferent, to be tolerated, ignored or over-ridden as circumstances may dictate. And heterogeneity *from* the masses, i.e. opposing class interests, is simply pernicious because it amounts to a denial of the basic value of social equity, and is therefore to be fought and eliminated by any means available.

Just two further observations on this kind of revolutionary democracy: what I have been describing is of course instanced

above all by communist systems of government, but it is not confined to them. I would say that its essential defining characteristic is the one-party state, but the party need not be communist though I think it must, to fill the democratic bill, be socialist or at least populist in inspiration. The most interesting and respectable, not to say admirable instance of a non-communist revolutionary democracy is Tanzania; rather more abnormal variants are Zambia and Kenya.

My second observation is that however repugnant such systems of government, especially communist ones, may be to the liberal palate, they are not therefore to be denied the genuine label of democratic – or not necessarily so. In their own reasoned estimation they are truly democratic because they offer government by the people (through the party) and in the interests of the people. They judge themselves (and they are given, in however bizarre a fashion, to quite as much self-criticism as evolutionary democracies) by their success in promoting the socio-political values of egalitarian justice.

f) *Incoherence in evolutionary and revolutionary democracies*

Both types of democracy are subject to very considerable incoherences. It seems to me that the biggest strain affecting the evolved British-type democracy at present is that, whereas its whole *ethos* derives from a tendency to distrust government and minimise it as far as possible, the present political trend in all countries of this type is towards an almost limitless extension of government. This takes very different forms in different countries, but it is both elicited by the increasing complexities of modern urbanised societies, and on the whole supported by most of the *demos*. So in this respect these democracies are being assimilated to their revolutionary rivals, but with them the process is hardly consistent with their original and still potent political philosophy. Modern extensive government is not so easily subjected to the traditional controls called for by the principles of ministerial responsibility or separation of powers. Watergate and its aftermath graphically illustrated this critical incoherence in the United States. In South Africa, whose constitution theoretically enshrines the principle of ministerial responsibility (and South Africa is still a genuine, though imperial, democracy), the actual extension of government power in the service of an ideology endorsed by the imperial *demos* has eroded the principle to vanishing point. Ministers are no longer responsible in any true sense to parliament, because parliament no longer wants them to be. In the United Kingdom the principle is tending to be by-passed by the government's dependence, brought about by its ever extended involvement in economic and social life, on the power of the trades unions.

The internal incoherences of revolutionary democracies are of a different sort. I think they are pinpointed by that hopelessly inadequate and abstract term, 'the masses'. The trouble is that the

theoretical basis of the system is too abstract. The masses, the proletariat, the people; these are abstractions, and painfully, dangerously procrustean ones when imposed on concrete social realities. The homogeneous substratum necessary for any democratic system is first presupposed, then imposed, then revealed as often as not to be simply unreal. Hence the ruthless violence that has marked the history of revolutionary democracy in the Soviet Union; hence perhaps the strange, scarcely decipherable ideogrammatic drama of the cultural revolution in China. This incoherence between ideological theory and social fact has struck me most forcibly when I have been listening to ANC broadcasts beamed to South Africa from Dar-es-Salaam. The line is firmly taken that the true revolutionary struggle in South Africa is *not* racial, is not between antagonistic ethnic groups and diverse cultures, African and European; it is simply once again the class war. A most ominous but highly characteristic oversimplification and distortion of the issues involved.

III *Application to South Africa*

a) *Tension between the values of liberty and equality*

Both libertarian and egalitarian values are generally accepted as positive, though not of course without qualification. But men do, and reasonably, value liberty, and they value at least equity – they have made the symbol of justice a pair of scales, the equal balance. And both sets of values are very firmly asserted by the whole Christian tradition.

The question still remains, in the light of repeated experience, whether the two sets of values are compatible with each other. Can a libertarian society really do justice to equality, or an egalitarian one genuinely respect liberty? It seems that people do have to choose at least to which set of values they will give the primacy. Having made the choice, and firmly established what they have chosen as the primary value, they may then go on to make what concessions they can to the secondary one. Thus it could be said that the United Kingdom, having secured through a long tradition the values of civil freedom, has been making hesitant steps of one sort or another since 1945 towards a greater social and economic equality among its citizens. The steps have been hesitant because they often seem, at least to some members of the society, to endanger the primary values of liberty (which are of course easily associated in the minds of the more affluent with their own affluence). How far the experiment can succeed will always remain an open question.

Revolutionary democracies seem to be much less confident about the possibility of extending civil liberties without undermining the basis of social equality. Attempts in this direction, in Europe at least, have been very feeble, and have eventually been repudiated as too dangerous, for example in Czechoslovakia. Of course, their egalitarian tradition is much more recent and less securely

established than the libertarian tradition of the United Kingdom, and the men who control the party are terrified of losing power. Tanzania once more perhaps merits attention as a state which, while giving primacy to the egalitarian values, is trying to do so without too much damage to those of civil freedom. But indefinite detention without trial is still a feature of its political life.

However, if it is an open question whether the two sets of values can be combined, there is no doubt at all that it is possible for both to be forfeited – and I mean by a democracy. This is what has happened in South Africa. Here the egalitarian values have never been given even lip-service; they have been explicitly rejected as false values. But libertarian values have been accepted in the past, they have been honoured even by this imperial democracy. Yet in the last thirty years they have been systematically and relentlessly curtailed by the representatives of the dominant *demos*, to a point where they cannot any longer be considered as values held in any esteem by this *demos*, that is to say by the whites in general and the Boers in particular. One asks, Why? In the name of what higher value, of what more urgent priority have the values of liberty been jettisoned? What do the slogans of national identity and the excuses of state security really mean? What in fact is the *value* of the nation or of the state?

In all soberness, I can only say that the answer to these questions is the same as it would be if we asked them about Amin's Uganda or Nazi Germany. The values for which everything is sacrificed, everything permitted however evil, are the fantasy values of paranoia; in Uganda it was the madness of one man, in Nazi Germany of both one man and of the national group he hypnotised, in South Africa of the national group. With their obsessive group consciousness the Boers are simply, and lethally, mad.

b) *The South African imperial democracy*

I have compared the South African imperial democracy with that of Periclean Athens. A more obvious comparison suggests itself with ancient Sparta. The values inscribed in the Spartan polity were neither those of freedom nor those of equality and equity. And yet the Spartans were enormously admired even by their Athenian enemies, even by a moral philosopher like Aristotle. The only value, at first glance, which one can see enshrined in their constitution is power. Sparta was a state organised purely and simply to keep its large Helot population in permanent subjection. But the power they valued, one could say, was at least controlled and ordered power; it was a power for which they were prepared to pay the price of an eccentrically severe self-discipline. They valued, and were admired for valuing, the asceticism of power, and for this value, which of course exalted their own superiority over their subject Helots, they were prepared to forego even the values of liberty.

But has the dominant *demos* of South Africa willingly fore-

sworn its liberties (for it has done so; no more rugged individualism even for the Boer, least of all for the Boer, imprisoned in one of the most stiflingly conformist societies in the world) for the sake of this dubious value? For power, yes; there is the quite explicit refusal to share power where it cannot be controlled by gerrymandering. However, since power cannot in today's world, and by men who vaunt their Christianity, be acclaimed as a value, it is called 'law and order' or peace. A universally accepted value, to be sure, and universally recognised as one of the most ambiguous. "He made a desert and called it peace". There is no end to the epigrams on the subject. However, while white South Africa, and the dominant Boer *demos* especially, values power and superiority just as much as the Spartans did, it can hardly be said to be ready to pay the price of practising the Spartan virtues. A rather different comparison is apt to suggest itself to a possibly malicious observer – one with Sybaris. Athens, Sparta and Sybaris in one. An original if repulsive combination, not unlike one of the beasts of the Apocalypse. The evidence after all, of all those swimming pools, and drive-ins, women with too many servants and too little occupation, the jet-set advertisements for Peter Stuyvesant cigarettes on Springbok radio - it hardly allows us to be convinced that many Boers would really prefer, as some of them have claimed, to be poor and white than rich and piebald. What was it we heard rumours of not so many months ago? Fifty farming families all lined up to emigrate to Bolivia. The delights of Sybaris, even (if necessary) in Bolivia, are too alluring for white and Boer South Africans' not very Spartan pride.

c) *Three possibilities for future democracy in South Africa*

So the combination may be original, but it is clearly unstable. Everybody knows this, from the imperial *demos* to the oppressed helots. The imperial democracy must give way to some other organisation of society. It may well, of course, give way to one of many forms of dictatorship, oligarchy (if it hasn't done so already), plutocracy, anarchy or aristocracy. But we are only considering the democratic possibilities of the future in terms of the analysis of the democratic idea given above. Of these I think there are three, each advocated by one or other of the interested parties in the state. I fear that pure or village democracy is not one of them (at least nobody advocates it), although much African tradition may be thought to contribute to such a possibility).³

The first possibility, then, is to dismantle the imperial democracy into its elements; that is to say to give up the *imperium*, more or less in the manner in which the United Kingdom lately dismantled its *imperium* by granting independence to its colonies. This is the policy which the nationalist party claims to be pursuing. The independence of the Transkei in 1976, followed by that of Botswana in 1977, were its first experiments in this direction.

The second possibility, in pursuit of a libertarian democracy, is

to transform the state into a federal or cantonal democracy. This is the solution favoured in various ways by the progressive-federal party, by Chief Garsha Buthelezi, and by the coloured Labour Party.

The third possibility, advocated by the ANC, probably favoured by SASO (South African Students' Organisation) and the BPC (Black People's Convention) is the revolutionary egalitarian democracy of the one-party state. Let us consider each in turn.

d) *Dismantling the imperial democracy: the nationalist policy*

The nationalist party has never succeeded in projecting a very liberal image of itself. In fact for many years it has chosen to regard 'liberal' as a dirty word, and to use it only in combination with the homeric epithets 'sickly sentimental'. And yet in theory their solution of dismantling the imperium they enjoy and granting independence to the diverse and still subject *demoi* of their empire is quite as liberal as the British policy inaugurated in Africa by Mr Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech all those years ago in Cape Town in 1960. They also like to talk about the possibility of a future commonwealth of Southern Africa. It is a nice irony that they make the British Empire and its recent transformation their model in this policy.

But the case of course is very different from the model, and the differences reveal the impractical nature of the nationalist solution (not to mention its basic hypocrisy). In the first place, the subject *demoi* do not inhabit neatly defined territories at all, these are anything but neatly defined; they are the absurdly fragmented bantustans or 'homelands'. And outside these the different racial and cultural groups live all mixed up in the same territories. In so far as the policy of separate or group areas has succeeded, it has succeeded only in forming ghettos of various sizes. But you cannot grant independence to ghettos, nor of course does the nationalist party intend to do so. Thus even if they succeed in getting all the 'homelands' to hive off as independent states, they will still be left with the same problem they started with, an imperial democracy within what they are pleased fictitiously to call white South Africa.

Until 1977 the policy did not even pretend to offer a solution to the problem of political and civil rights for Coloureds, Indians and the 'urban Bantu', not to mention of course the rural Bantu, in 'white South Africa'. Then in that year a Cabinet committee, set up in response to a recommendation by the Theron commission on the state of the coloured people, produced the draft of a new and remarkable constitution. It proposes three parliaments, presumably of equal authority, one for Whites, one for Coloureds, one for Indians, which will legislate each for the affairs of its own group (the affairs will be rather more difficult to disentangle from each other than the groups, but we must not let a little thing like that worry us); each group will have its prime minister and cabinet.

The majority parties of these parliaments (on the principle of 'winner takes all') will elect a council in the proportion of four white members, two coloured and one Indian (I forget the absolute number proposed); and this council will in turn elect an executive President of the Republic, who will administer the country with the assistance of a cabinet or council of eleven members, six white, and five coloured and Indian. I think, but it is not entirely clear from the reports, that this top cabinet or council will also make what laws are needed to regulate matters of common concern to all three communities. I don't think the electoral college will have that function. The president and his cabinet, and even the president alone if his cabinet fails to reach consensus, will have very extensive powers.

It takes a Boer nationalist to fail to see the bland dishonesty of this proposal. It ensures a built-in majority in the positions of power, not merely for the Whites, but for the Boer nationalists. But of course it won't work. It has already been rejected without qualification by the already existing coloured and Indian institutions. The government appears none the less to be going ahead with it, or with something like it; the usual pattern of solutions reached without consultation and then imposed on recalcitrant and ungrateful beneficiaries.

So this elaborate piece of nonsense is just one more sign of the imperial democracy's refusal genuinely to dismantle itself, and of its readiness, rather than share or distribute power, to turn itself into an imperial dictatorship, or to use the classical Greek word, into an imperial tyranny. Who will be the first tyrant, and in all probability the last? The name has been mentioned of the egregious, sinister, arch-Pharisee, Dr Andries Treurnicht, a kind of mixture of Enoch Powell and Ian Paisley within the South African political firmament. In Mr Vorster's immortal words, it is a prospect "too ghastly to contemplate".

And what, in any case, of the 'urban (and rural) Bantu'? Well, the really epoch-making concession here is that they are no longer to be called 'Bantu', because it has at last been conceded in response to the school riots of 1976 and afterwards, that Africans don't like being called 'Bantu'. A new name has not actually been thought of (no one will dream of asking the late Bantu what they want to be called). 'Africans' won't do, of course, because it is reserved, in the form of 'Afrikaners' for the Boer. Probably 'Blacks' will be attempted, but as claim to this title is also laid by the more militant Coloureds and Indians, one foresees endless equivocations. The *real* verbal solution to the problem of such Bantu/Blacks/Africans, however will be that they will all be citizens of one or other of the independent homelands, and so will be '*foreigners*' anyway in 'white South Africa', who will have no right to representation.

Solutions of problems by changing the names, or the words

used to frame them in, has long been a favourite nationalist activity. It illustrates the deep-seated madness that afflicts the country's dominant group. Meanwhile, what it will actually *mean*, as the experience of the Xhosas (Transkeians) and Tswanas (Bophutswanans) has already shown, is that these 'foreigners' will continue to be treated exactly as hitherto, with pass laws, security laws, residence restrictions, permits etc. all being administered by officials and policemen who in the lower *échelons* (even the higher ones, perhaps), are probably among the most stupid and the most bloody-minded of the whole world.

The policy as a whole, being implemented so relentlessly, so blindly, so self-righteously, so cruelly, so dishonestly, is a recipe in all probability for the destruction of the Boer nation, and with absolute certainty for continental war.

e) *A federal, libertarian democracy*

This is the one possibility that is the most unlikely to be realised. But it is still worth considering, if only to see whether there is a genuine alternative to the other two more deadly possibilities. Its basic presupposition is negotiation and some kind of treaty between the interested parties. So it is impossible to say in advance what such a solution would look like. One can only observe the difficulties in its way, perhaps say what it cannot look like, and offer some suggestions that could be considered by the negotiators.

Given that the heterogeneous groups composing the population are ethnically (or racially) and culturally diverse, and that they live mixed up together throughout the country, a federal South Africa could scarcely look like a federal Switzerland on a larger scale. If it did, it would solve nothing, because each constituent canton or province would be as heterogeneous, more or less, as the whole. It is the same problem as the one which bedevils the nationalist policy of dismantling the imperial democracy.

We remarked above that you can hardly grant independence to ghettos; but perhaps you could federate ghettos? Could you establish a federation not of provinces but of municipalities? What then would these small units be viable for? And would they in any case succeed, except in a few cases, in being homogeneous? It might work for a few big cities, hardly for the little towns of rural South Africa and their hinterland.

Could one consider a non-territorial federation? Something like this seems to underlie the cabinet's own proposal for a new constitution. Could it work, even if it were not so palpably rigged in favour of the dominant white group, if it involved a real, and not merely a verbal sharing of power (and of course included the Africans)? Just possibly; a kind of communal federation (where the difference between the heterogeneous communities is religious) has been the basis of the Lebanese constitution. Its manifest collapse in the last few years has been due to the intrusion of ex-

ternal elements, exacerbating communal animosities. But it is an illustration of the weakness of such a solution – or of the instability of a situation where such a solution is required.

In South Africa the heterogeneities that count are not religious but cultural and racial. But races can mix and merge genetically, and cultures can change and merge socially, sometimes very fast. So one would not want a kind of communal federation that fixed the present racial/cultural communities rigidly and for ever as they are now. The laws forbidding or restricting racial mixing would have to be among the first to be scrapped under such a constitution. People must be allowed to choose which community they will adhere to for political purposes.

A broad proposal, then, for discussion by the negotiators of a non-territorial federal constitution may perhaps be made ('federal' is probably the wrong word). I would suggest that for political purposes the population be considered as constituting *two* communities only, the black and the white. People could choose, when they registered as voters and/or tax-payers (the registration would have to be compulsory), which community they would belong to for voting and tax-paying, the only two activities to be subject to discrimination in terms of colour. The choice would be most crucial for the coloured and Indian people, but would be free for everyone.

These two communities then would be represented in the central parliament in the proportion of, say, two black to one white, or perhaps three black to one white. Now the broad actual situation in South Africa is that the blacks predominate in man-power and the whites in money-power. So a *modus vivendi* is to be reached by a negotiable balance between these two forms of power. In the parliament therefore the representatives of each community would deliberate and vote separately on the *personal* taxes of each community (income, poll, and property tax), while they would deliberate and vote together on customs, excise and company taxes. Thus there would be a general source of revenue controlled by black man-power at the government's disposal, but a very important source of additional revenue would be controlled by white money-power. This would be a guarantee of white interests and security, but one that the white community could only use for horse-trading, not for blackmailing a government dominated by black man-power.

On all other matters the parliament would legislate and act as one body. But any change in entrenched rights (to be agreed by the negotiators) and constitutional law would require a majority from each section of the parliament. The executive would also have to represent both communities. Whether or not the same kind of communal provisions should prevail for local or regional government would also have to be discussed. Certain crucial sectors of administration should be under local, not central control,

above all the *police*, on the English model.

f) *Revolutionary egalitarian democracy*

The third possibility for South Africa is a revolutionary egalitarian democracy. With my ingrained liberal bias, I earlier called it, together with the first possibility, deadly. But I must say that it is nothing like so deadly as the first possibility, which is approximately the present reality. The deadly thing about it is that if it is introduced it is most likely to be in the wake of some sort of prolonged and violent revolutionary war, as in Mozambique or Angola or in all probability Zimbabwe. But our concern here is what kind of egalitarian democracy South Africa, in this eventuality, is most probably going to get. One would prefer to think it is the Tanzanian variety. Not that Tanzania is by any means a utopian society. But its government under the CCM⁴ and Dr Nyerere does present an original, and apparently viable spectacle to our gaze among the new states of Africa. One-party democracy, with an egalitarian bias, called African socialism, does seem to function there. Would it function and could it be installed in South Africa?

The indications are hardly favourable. Tanzania, though by no means a homogeneous society, does not exhibit the deep-seated dissonances of the South African scene. Here there is no party, even among the Africans, that is likely to emerge so overwhelmingly victorious as TANU did at the time of independence in Tanganyika. South Africa, unless it proves to be entirely an original case, has more affinities with Angola – or Zimbabwe.

But at the moment it is hard to envisage any movement becoming powerful enough to make a revolutionary democracy successful. If a coalition of liberation movements does succeed in achieving a revolution, one possible outcome is that none of them will be strong enough to impose itself as 'the party' even by civil war; and hence some kind of negotiation, just possibly on the lines suggested above for a federal libertarian democracy, might be the only way out. Or the Republic might simply disintegrate, and thus ironically would be achieved the nationalist aim of dismantling the imperial democracy; but in a South Africa dismantled in the wake of revolution it is hard to foresee a very big place for the *volk*. This last contingency, however (leaving aside the probable fate of the Boer *volk*), is not in my view very probable, since the forces of a kind of pan-Africanism, transcending ethnic heterogeneities among Africans, do seem to be in the ascendent all over the continent – at least on a long term view.

g) *The touch-stone of Namibia: conclusion*

I call Namibia a touch-stone, because the course of events there will not only influence the situation in the Republic (that goes without saying), but could also serve as a model, an example and a lesson. This is true both of what has been happening there, and what is likely to happen.

When a few years ago, the South African government finally

realised they would not get away with incorporating South West Africa into the Republic of South Africa, and applying to it the full separate development bantustan policy, they instituted the Turnhalle conference precisely to negotiate a constitution. It failed for one basic reason and all that followed from that reason; the South African government insisted that representation at the conference should be in terms of 'ethnic group', a concept dear to South African nationalists and nobody else. This meant that SWAPO was excluded, which was of course the very foolish intention of the South African government; how can negotiations be of any value if the biggest party to the dispute is excluded from them? In addition, the whites at the conference, with the government behind them, continued to suffer from the fatal delusion that they could negotiate from a position of superiority and strength, and so the negotiations were dragged out to an inordinate length. They were overtaken by events; all that has emerged from them is a rather odd looking party or alliance.

Now the only chance of a peaceful transition to independence is if the UN plan succeeds. That it has got as far as it has shows that the pressure of the five so-called Western powers, the US, Britain, France, West Germany and Canada has some effect on South Africa, and that of the so-called front line presidents of Angola, Mozambique, Tanzania, Botswana and Zambia some effect on SWAPO.

Supposing, and it is a very optimistic supposition which I would not be prepared to stake much money on, that there is a peaceful transition to independence, will the kind of democracy to emerge from it be of the 'western' libertarian type, or the revolutionary egalitarian type. All the signs suggest that it will be the latter. This is what the South African whites are terrified of; it is the folly of the South African nationalist party and *nothing else* over the last thirty years that has produced this probable result. By their pride, blindness and obstinacy they have driven the blacks of Namibia to power their drive for liberation with a Marxist ideology.

Can these lessons be learned by the South African government for South Africa itself? Clearly not; they have shown in the last two years that they are beyond learning any lessons. But should it be that *per impossibile* they did learn the right lessons, this is what they would do. They would convene a Turnhalle type conference for South Africa *now*, as the progressive-federal party and others keep on urging them to do. They would not try to load it in their own favour by insisting on the ethnicity principle for representation, but would invite to it all the organisations they have banned over the years, the ANC (African National Congress), PAC (Pan-African Congress), SASO, BPC, etc.

Should they fail to do this, could the western powers bring the same sort of pressure to bear over the liberation of South Africa

as they have done over the independence of Namibia? They could try; they might succeed. But whether a future South African democracy is of a libertarian or an egalitarian type rests almost entirely in the hands of the Boer nationalists. No more coarsely unskilful hands could be imagined.

- 1 It was the intention to publish the winning essay in the Institute's journal. To the best of my knowledge this has not yet been done, nor the winner's name revealed. Perhaps it would now be too dangerous – in itself a significant comment on the issue.
- 2 I refuse any longer to accord as of right this continental name to this small and bloody-minded intrusive group, which only with extreme reluctance allows the indigenous population to be called African.

- 3 In 'La sorcellerie des blancs; un anthropologue s'interroge sur l'Occident' (*Etudes*, March 1976), René Bureau suggests that what Europeans have always regarded as simply the backwardness of black Africa in the arts and sciences of civilisation is due to a deliberate social choice lying at the roots of African cultures. It is a choice governed by the sentiment of what he calls jealousy. Africans, he suggests, are jealous of their basic human equality – their fundamental political value is therefore not liberty but equality. So they are jealous (not envious) of any man or any initiative which tends to upset this equality. This jealousy finds expression in the universal belief in witchcraft. This is the negative aspect of what he has discovered to be, in contrast with European civilisation, a singularly human and humane and adult culture.

He suggests the best translation for African words commonly rendered by 'witch' or 'sorcerer' would be the word 'superman'. This is the man who has the genius, or the will, or the luck to excel his fellows, for his own ends. And against him African society sets its face in implacable jealousy. Since European civilisation, as experienced by Africans, sets a premium on success, and honours the man who excels (in whatever way and for whatever purposes), white men are the supermen, the sorcerers *par excellence*.

His studies have all been made in West Africa, and are doubtless not applicable without qualification to the South African village democracy, and especially its capacities to sabotage, with an ironic *insouciance*, the aims and dreams of western technocratic society.

- 4 CCM is the result of a merger between TANU, the Tanganyika African National Union, and the Afro-Shirazi party of Zanzibar. It was under TANU that Tanganyika achieved independence.